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ABSTRACT

This essay deals with the use of cartoons and comic strips to teach English as a second language. It illustrates, through past professional literature written on the subject and through specific lessons, the various instructional uses to which cartoons and comic strips lend themselves. Cartoons and comic strips can be applied to the following language skills: structure, reading, vocabulary development, listening comprehension, culture and writing. Examples of various cartoons and comic strips are included with activities designed to teach the various language skills. (Author/AMH)

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CARTOONS AND COMIC STRIPS IN THE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CLASS

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows the cliché "A picture is worth a thousand words." With this idea in mind, the English as a Second Language teacher has an enormous resource of material at his/her fingertips as an aid in teaching ESL. Visual aids are a tremendously flexible asset in giving students valuable experience in gaining communicative competence in the target language. ESL experts such as Harold B. Allen, Betty J. Frey, and Kenneth Croft all include sections on the use of visual aids in their methodology books on the teaching of ESL.[1]

This paper cannot possibly cover the complete gamut of visual aids in the ESL classroom; so, the subject of study will be limited to a discussion of the uses of cartoons and comic strips in the ESL classroom. First, it is important to make a distinction between cartoons and comic strips. A cartoon by nature is usually a one frame caricature and is used to present a particular idea. The idea may be political or social in nature and usually has an element of humor attached to it. The cartoon may be captioned or uncaptioned. A comic strip, on the other hand, is more than one frame and

1. Harold B. Allen, ESL Book of Readings (NY, McGraw Hill. 1965) p. 19
Kenneth Croft, Readings on ESL, (Cambridge, Mass. Winthrop Publishers, 1972) p. 378
Betty J. Frey, Basic Helps for Teaching ESL, (Tucson, Ariz. Palo Verde Publishing, 1970) p. 31

runs in a daily or weekly newspaper. The comic strip may have a continuing story such as Dick Tracy, Winnie Winkle, or Gasoline Alley. Or, it may deal with a different topic each week. These self contained comic strips are usually captioned and deal with any number of topics such as political moral, social, familial, or male /female issues. It is not necessary to read the previous day's issue of the comic strip to appreciate this kind of comic.

I feel there is tremendous relevance in using cartoons and comic strips in the ESL classroom because "they offer a look into American life and thought, American preoccupations, idiosyncracies and some of their characteristics all in concentrated form."[2] Cartoons and comic strips offer a much needed dose of humor to the ESL student and teacher. In this paper Ihope to illustrate how we can use cartoons and comics in a variety of instructional settings. I will include a section on previous work and articles concerned with the use of cartoons and comics in ESL and a series of lessons designed to teach the specific skills of the target language. These lessons will deal with structure, reading, conversation, listening comprehension and writing and culture.

2. Christian Bruggeman and Robert Elkins. Comic Strips in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (Washington, D.C: ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 056 591,1971), p. 1

A brief outline of what each lesson will entail follows:

In order to teach the simple past tense using regular and irregular verbs, I will present a lesson using a LOUIE cartoon to illustrate my objective. I will also include a lesson on the use of the future tense with 'be going to plus verb using a LOUIE cartoon cut into strips. This will demonstrate another technique in using wordless comic strips to teach structure. In the appendix some samples of students' work will be included.

To teach the skill of listening comprehension I will divided the class into pairs and have them use the Wordless Workshop strip from Popular Science Magazine. Preliminary vocabulary will be presented before the lesson begins. One student will have the first half of the strip which presents the problem. The other student will have the second half of the strip which offers the solution. In order to solve the problem, both the skill of listening and speaking must be employed.

A conversation lesson will be presented using a HENRY and FERDNAND comic strip. Students must describe what they see in the cartoon. I will also present a lesson on dialogue writing and role playing using the HOCUS FOCUS cartoon. The students will create an imaginary dialogue among the characters in the cartoon.

Several one frame cartoons, the Doonesbury comic strip, Blondie and Cathy strips will serve as the basis for a culture lesson on such themes as women's rights, male/female roles doctors, and family problems.

Reading skills and language arts activities can be developed by giving students cartoons such as Charlie Brown, Doonesbury or Cathy and having them answer related comprehension questions. Vocabulary and idioms exercises will be included in the lesson.

The skill of writing will be enhanced by having the students write their own dialogues to an uncaptioned cartoon or removing the captions of a worded comic strip and asking the students to supply a dialogue. After students write their dialogues they will compare them with the original dialogue. I will use the strip Hagar the Horrible to illustrate this. Also, after the structure lesson, students will dictate their sentences to a fellow student. This will reinforce structures, punctuation, capitalization and spelling skills.

All appropriate charts, comic strips and cartoons will be included in the essay.

I feel this essay will offer teachers an excellent instructional tool with minimal cost factor involved. I have found this tool not only highly effective but at times quite entertaining to my students. I hope others, if they are to read this essay, will derive the same benefit from it.

RESEARCH ON PROFESSIONAL

LITERATURE

RESEARCH ON PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Let us now analyze some of the literature that is available in the various professional journals and some of the textbook material which make use of cartoons, comic strips and visual aids.

Among the texts available I found two in particular which use cartoons or caricatures: Skits in English as a Second Language by Mary Elizabeth Hines published by Regents Publishing Co., New York and Composition through Pictures published by Longman Inc. The Skits present a series of role-playing dialogues which concentrate on a particular grammatical item such as the third person singular present tense. The skit is preceded by an illustration using characters from the Archie comic strip. The picture basically represents the dialogue in the skit and can be used to introduce vocabulary items that the student needs to know in order to play the particular role set out in the skit. Instructions on how to use the text are carefully outlined at the beginning of the text.

The other instructional aid that I have come across is Composition through Pictures published by Longman Inc. in which several pictures are presented to get students to write about the picture and use a particular structure in their story such as verb plus infinitive. Vocabulary items are presented below the picture and a series of comprehension

questions are given with each lesson. The students must write a story based on the picture after they have thoroughly reviewed all the vocabulary items and comprehension questions. Longman also publishes Beginning Composition for younger students. Some of the pictures present some elements of humor. All pictures are wordless and caricaturized.

Let's turn to some of the professional literature dealing with the use of cartoons and comics in the ESL class. One kind of cartoon we come across frequently in magazines such as The New Yorker, Playboy or Better Homes and Gardens is the one frame cartoon dealing with political issues, social problems or male/female relationships presented in a humorous light. These cartoons are very apropos for teaching certain aspects of American culture to foreign students. In my opinion you would need to use the material with a rather advanced class because a certain degree of sophistication in the language is necessary in order to grapple with the subject material.

In an article from the TESOL Quarterly dealing with culture via one frame cartoons, the author Jib Fowles askes the following:

> There are three basic questions which can give shape to the discussion of a cartoon in the classroom. (1) What is the factual situation? (2) What is the incongruity that would make an American laugh? (3) What is the cultural anxiety treated here which laughter helps to reduce? [3]

3. Jib Fowles, "Ho,Ho,Ho: Cartoons in the Language Class," TESOL Quarterly, 4-2 (June, 1970) p. 155

By helping the students to see the underlying attitude or conflicts presented in the cartoon, we can give them a greater awareness into American society. It will make them cognizant of American dreams, aspirations, foibles, and frustrations. Care must be taken to select a cartoon which exhibits some kind of cultural lesson to be taught to the ESL student as not all cartoons are going to convey a cultural message.

The areas of concern, the factual situation require that the student relay what he sees, especially if he can tell another student who may not understand the cartoon. Then he must see what it is that might make an American laugh, and lastly he must determine the underlying tension or anxiety. What is the problem we are dealing with in which we are trying to relieve our tension?

I believe a cartoonist is really a kind of spokesman for our culture. You see this in comic strips such as Charlie Brown which deals with the problems of inadequacy. Charlie Brown will never be a good baseball player. We have Lucy, the optimist but, on the other hand, there is Linus who is not quite secure unless he is carrying his 'security blanket' with him. The Blondie comic strip, popular for so long, treats the problem of the emasculated husband who turns to gluttony with his Dagwood sandwiches to compensate for his lack of success.

Dick Tracy deals with the everpresent topic of violence

in our society. We also see that reflected in our comic book heroes Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman. Little Orphan Annie and L'il Abner have reflected conservative political views in their strip ever since their origins. L'il Abner's principal them is the maintenance of law and order. Understanding the underlying theme or topic in the strip is excellent meant for a culture lesson in the ESL class.

When we present a lesson on American culture via comic strips, we must take care to ask ourselves the following questions.

1. Do the strips present any aspects of American life?
2. Are there any symbols or persons rejected in the strip?
3. Why isn't the comic strip funny to the foreign student?
4. Does it reflect social criticism?
5. Are there indoctrinations or political manipulations in the strip?
6. Does it perpetuate some kind of stereotype or cliche?
7. Can it be used for a lexical or syntactical exercise?
8. What elements (colloquialisms) reflect native characteristics? 4

Remember that captioned cartoons can reflect humor and cultural characteristics...."Language and culture are inseparable; to teach one means to teach the other."[5]

4. Christian Bruggeman and Robert Elkins. Comic Strips in the Teaching of English as A Foreign Language (Wash. D.C: ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 056 591, 1971) p. 17

5. Anthony Mollica, "Cartoons in the Language Classroom," Canadian Modern Language Review: Vol. 32, No. 4 March, 1975 p.426

Let us turn to some of the other instructional uses to which cartoons and comic strips lend themselves . These skills are (1) reading (2) conversation (3) listening (4) composition (5) vocabulary and (6) grammar.

To shed some light on the use of comics as a means of teaching reading, I found several language arts activities which can be taught via the comics. Some of these activities are as follows:

1. Consonant blends - you can teach clusters such as cl, rd, st. etc.
2. Picture interpretation - the student can draw a picture around the word or phrase which refers to the picture.
3. Special print - have students find examples of words with larger or different print.
4. Possessives - John's book.
5. Compound words - butterfly, milkweed
6. Antonyms - list antonyms on board. Find opposites in story
7. Following directions
8. Reading for details
9. Summarization - one sentence summary of story
10. Detecting mood - how do the characters feel?
11. Predicting outcome - leave out last frame. Students will predict what will happen.
12. Major and minor characters
13 Getting the main idea
14. Use of figurative language - find slang words
15. Classification.- is it a love or superhero strip.[6]

In selecting some of the comic strips to be read in class, it is advisable to choose something that the students would all like to read. You could see which cartoons they might already

6. Emma H. Swain, "Using Comic Books to Teach Reading and Language Arts" Journal of Reading : 22-3 (Dec. 1978)p.255

know for there are some comics that are published all over the world such as Mickey Mouse and Charlie Brown. Also you must consider the age group that you are working with. The younger students might prefer some of the superhero comic strips such as Superman whereas an adult would probably rather read something more sophisticated such as Doonesbury.

Sequencing in reading is a very important skill and can be taught quite nicely using comic strips. By cutting the story into strips, it has been suggested to:

> put the comic cut out frames into a box and ask the students to take the pieces and create a story out of the pieces. The objective is the creation of a cohesive story. Be sure to keep a copy of the original. If the student wants to know what the original story was like, the other copy of the story can be shown to him. This is one way to teach the concept of sequence. [7]

Students can also develop communicative competence using cartoons or comics because they contain many features of conversational English. We can list some of these features as follows:

1. Contractions - I'm, he's
2. Hesitations - uh.....
3. Exclamation, interjections - Oh! Ah!
4. Afterthoughts - well, maybe
5. Assimilation phenomena - Wanna eat?

7. Mark Cohan, "Comics in the Classroom" Social Education, Vol. 39. No. 5 (May 1975) p. 325.

6. Weak stressed form of words. - let's join'em.
7. Omission of second person singular - (Are you) Coming?
8. Contrastive stress. I AM equal.
9. Short Sentences
10. Incomplete sentences.
11. Vocatives - Hey!
12. Confirmation tags - No,money, huh? You did it, right?
13. Fixed or stereotyped phrases - to tell the truth
14. Shortening of words - y'know.
15. Paraphrasing
16. Simultaneous and overlapping speech. [8]

A good way to test students knowledge of conversational patterns in English is to play a speech identification game with them. Give students samples of conversational English and have them match it with a corresponding list of conversational features.[9]

Another technique that I have found useful in developing conversation skills is to give students a comic strip such as Henry or Ferdnand which are uncaptioned and have the class describe the strip. After the whole class has commented on the strip and their remarks are taperecorded, you can replay the tape for possible error correction.

8. Francisco Gomes de Mattos, Djever think about Comic Books? Creativity: New Ideas in Language Teaching. (Yazugi, Brazil) ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 105 769 1975) p. 2

9. Ibid., p. 5

I believe this type of comic strip is excellent material because it is "easy to see and handle, free from ambiguity and....free from cultural misinterpretation."[10] It is important that a strip be relatively "culture free" for certain types of lessons. It is especially applicable when dealing with beginners in a structure or conversation lesson because the simplicity of the strip facilitates their handling of the language.

Another approach to expanding speaking skills is to have the students act out the dialogue in the strip. The Blondie, Cathy and even Hagar the Horrible comic strips offer excellent role-playing material for the ESL student.

I sometimes like to have the students write their own dialogues to a wordless strip. In a workshop at the 1979 TESOL Convention on developing communication skills, Judith Winn Bell Olsen presented an example of dialogue writing by means of an uncaptioned cartoon.[11] I would further develop this by having the students act out their own imaginary dialogues. The dialogues of a captioned strip could also be deleted and students would have to supply their own

10. Kenneth Croft, Readings on ESL, (Winthrop Publishers, Mass 1972) p. 387.

11. Beatrice Kreppel, Conversation at Staff Meeting, March, 1979 Hunter College, International English Language Institute

dialogues. Later they can compare theirs with the original dialogue. The conversation lesson will have to include the skill of writing in order to instrument the lesson.

To further develop conversation and composition skills together, you can have "small group discussions take place between three or more students after which...call on a discussant from each group to report briefly on their observations....A written summary should follow the discussion and language summary." 12

My personal experience with comics, essentially the uncaptioned comics, is that they lend themselves magnificently to the teaching of structure in English. Specifically, they are most applicable when teaching verb tenses. The previously cited article in the French Review supports my contention as the author also found that "certain scenes in the comics visually and dramatically reinforced the use of mood and tenses."[13] Let me clarify that the author of this article used captioned comic strips whereas I prefer the wordless comic strips. He cites the example of reinforcing the use of the subjunctive in French.

12. Rufus K. Marsh, "Teaching French with the Comics," French Review, Vol. 5, No. 6 (May 1978) p. 781.

13. Ibid., p. 780

He used a Charlie Brown strip in which Linus after failing a True-False test says to Luch, "Si, j'avais commencé por un 'faux' au lieu d'un vrai' (If I'd only begun with a False instead of a True...) The same principle can be applied in teaching the past unreal in English (If plus past perfect, conditional perfect). However, I feel that the wordless comic strips offer more possibilities when teaching tenses and moods.

How does one teach the skill of listening comprehension with comics or cartoons? What I have read seems to use the same approach in that the teacher reads or describes the situation or briefly explains new words and the situation before actually showing the students the strip. Then the students are given the strip and are more prepared for a discussion and reading lesson. I have not found any information that presents the lesson on listening comprehension as I will illustrate in this essay.

Cartoons and comics allow several alternatives to teach the skill of writing. One of the things I have already mentioned is summarizing what was discussed orally. The writing exercise may be assigned as a dictation by the students to the teacher or to a fellow student or may be given as a homework assignment. We also mentioned

dialogue writing as an excellent tool for developing writing skills. The student's imagination is allowed to run freely in this kind of exercise. Comic strips help students to learn order in writing. They can sequence their writing more cohesively by faithfully following each frame of the strip, just as they must learn sequencing in reading.

It is important to elicit all the vocabulary necessary to write about the wordless strip before the students are assigned the 'composition.' Once this is done the students are ready to tackle the assignment. It is also essential to consider the level of the class as we have mentioned before. I find the student who is a beginner will probably work better with the Louie, Ferdnand or Henry comic strip. I feel the less complicated cartoons or strips require a minimum knowledge of the language to make the students' writing as coherent as possible. However, a more advanced student could be assigned a political cartoon or one with some underlying social significance. A list of related questions about the cartoon would be given and the students should be able to write about what they see. This kind of writing

assignment follows a culture lesson very appropriately.

In teaching Italian to students in Canada, Anthony Mollica also finds that cartoons may be used for oral or written compositions. He suggests the following:

> Cartoons are ideal for this activity provided that a series of uncaptioned sequential cartoons are made available. In this case, the teacher should act as moderator/secretary. As moderator, the teacher should elicit from the students as much vocabulary as possible; as secretary, he/she should write these words on the blackboard under their grammatical terms.
>
> Once all the necessary vocabulary is written on the blackboard (and if desired, copied in the students' notebooks), the students will be assigned either an oral or a written resume. The lexical aids placed before him/her will be of great assistance in his/her assignment. On the other hand, the teacher may decide to guide the student with a series of either written or oral questions, the answers to which will be an oral or written summary. [14]

Below is an illustration of the comic strip he used to get students to write in Italian. Of course, the same principle is applicable in teaching ESL.

14. Anthony Mollica, "Cartoons in the Language Classroom," Canadian Modern Language Review: Vol.32,No.4 Mar.1975 p.442

A good technique to get younger children interested in writing is to use old coloring books and copy pictures from the coloring books. An example of this was presented in an article in Today's Education by Huberta Schmelter. The teacher used pictures of pirates and buccaneers with a class of Mexican American pupils (where only Spanish was used at home). She had her students find the appropriate vocabulary related to the pictures in the dictionary and in stories they read about pirates. Once they completed their research on the topic and had learned the necessary vocabulary, they were ready to write their stories. Ms. Schmelter felt that this was very successful in motivating slower students to read and write in English.[15]

Let us consider the various possibilities available to us in visually presenting the cartoon or comic strip. If your school has a good xerox or duplicating machine, you can usually get a good clear copy that way. This allows for every student to have his own copy of the cartoon. You can also present them using an overhead projector. This allows the teacher to cover any part of the strip in order to get the students to imagine what is going to happen next. If the teacher is artistic, he/she can draw the frames on

15. Huberta Schmelter, "Teaching English to Mexican American Students," Today's Education: 61 (Mar. 1972) p. 41

on the blackboard and cover each frame with large newspaper pages. Comics can also be reduced by photography to the form of single slides.[16] This is a rather expensive technique but I imagine quite effective in capturing the students' attention. We may also use the thermofax machine to transfer a good xerox copy to a ditto master. Comics can be cut into strips and presented in little packets to the students. Basically, any method which clearly presents the strip or cartoon is acceptable. However you may want to present the cartoon depends very much on its instructional use. Mr. Marsh makes the relevant statement that "different comics lend themselves best to one or more instructional use and not to all on an equal basis."[17]

After a careful review of the professional literature available on the use of cartoons and comics in the language class, I feel that these articles have provided me with good reason and excellent suggestions on how to implement them in the ESL class. The following pages will attempt to illustrate my own ideas on the use of cartoons and comics in the English as a Second Language Class.

16. Alun L.W. Rees,"Cartoons Slides for the Language Class," English Language Teaching Journal;Vol 32-4 (Jul. 1978)p.276

17. Rufus K. Marsh, "Teaching French with the Comics," French Review: 5-6 (May, 1978) p.781

APPLICATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Part III Applications and Procedures

Lesson Structure - Beginning Level

Objective: To reinforce the past tense of irregular and regular verbs in English

To practice the Yes/No and Wh question forms in the past tense

To practice the use of the negative in the past tense.

Materials: A xeroxed copy of the Louie cartoon with the last three frames covered.

Blackboard - a list of verbs needed for the description of the picture.

throw	pick up	hit	tell
sit	move	stand up	get(angry)
chase	run	drop	bring (back)

Activity: Whole Class

Procedure: 1. Distribute the strip with the bottom frames folded.

2. Ask students not to look at the strip until instructed.

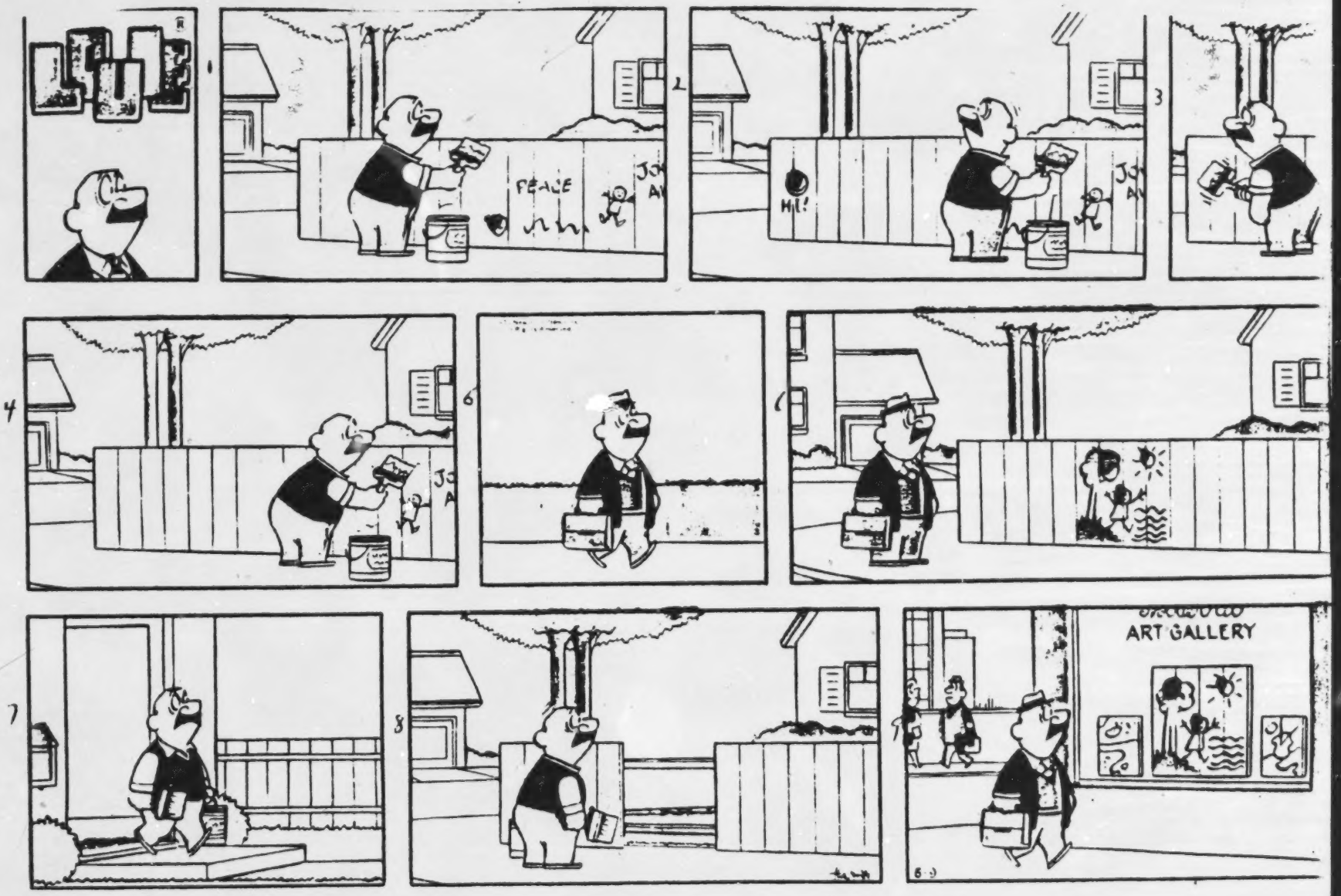
3. Review the verbs on the blackboard and their past tense forms.

4. Ask students to look at the cartoon now.

5.Present the verb 'throw'.

6. Pretend this happened yesterday. Ask the students to tell you what Louie did and didn't do.

Structure Lesson on the use of Future with 'be going to' + verb



CUT HERE IF YOU WISH TO SAVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

Structure Lesson on the use of Prepositions of Place

Prepositions of Place Name_____

in	around
on	about
at	between
with	behind
of	under
to	outside
next to	through
opposite	against
across from	

(Title)_____

1. The setting for this cartoon is a typical living room of an apartment_____a large building _____New York.

2. The apartment is_____the first or second floor _____the building.

3. _____the windows, we can see other apartment buildings.

4. _____the room there are two couches_____each other.

5. There is a coffee table_____the two couches.

6. _____the coffee table there are some flowers_____a vase and an ashtray.

7. There are some pictures_____the walls.

8. There is a large plant_____one picture and there are some bookshelves_____the other picture.

9. There is a lamp_____one of the couches

10. There are four average-looking middle-aged people_____ the room, and one weird-looking person_____the room.

11. A dark-haired man_____glasses is sitting _____one couch.

12. He has a pipe_____his mouth and a smile _____his face.

13. He is holding a drink _____his hand.

14. He is probably the husband___the woman_____the print pants suit, who is holding the tray_____some crackers and cheese _____it.

15. She is the hostess and her husband is the host.

16. She has curly hair and a thin, pointed nose.

17. The woman is serving hor d'oeuvres_____a man and woman who are sitting _____the couch which is _____ there host.

18. The woman's arm is resting_____the arm_____the couch.

19. Her legs are crossed and she is balancing a cocktail glass_____her lap.

20. She is wearing a dark dress_____a polka-dot scarf _____her neck.

21. Her husband is sitting_____her.

22. He is holding a drink_____his left hand.

23. Both_____them are looking _____the hostess.

24. They have worried, puzzled expressions ____their faces.

25. They are probably wondering _____the strange-looking sight_____the window.

26. A rather heavy, bald man is standing_____a ladder, which is leaning_____the window.

27. He is wearing a mask_____angry-looking eyes and big teeth.

28. His big hands are _____his head with the thumbs stuck _____his ears, and he is waving his hands as if he is trying to scare the guests.

29. But the hostess does not seem to be worried.

30. She is smiling and saying something _____her guests.

31. Maybe she is talking about the man, and maybe she isn't. What do you think she is saying? Put her words here.

"_____

_____"

Now think of a good title and write it on the first page. READ YOUR WORK AGAIN. DOES IT SOUND LIKE NATURAL ENGLISH? DO YOU ALL AGREE? HAVE YOU USED ALL OR MOST OF THE PREPOSITIONS AT LEAST ONE TIME? IS YOUR SPELLING CORRECT. HAND IN ONE PAPER FOR YOUR GROUP.

Lesson — Structure - Intermediate Level

Objective: To teach the past unreal tense using if clauses in English.

Materials: Xerox copies of the Louie cartoon
Vocabulary needed to describe the strip on the blackboard.

throw	hear	break	catch
go	get angry	cry	yell at
regret	give	catch	

Activity: Whole class

Procedure:

1. Distribute the comic strip and discuss what is happening in the picture.

2. Have them describe the picture in the past using the verbs listed on the board.

3. Tell the students to imagine that the story really never happened but that it could have happened.

4. Review all the past participle forms of the verbs listed on the board.

5. Ask them to describe what would have happened if.....

6. Give them some examples: If Louie's son hadn't thrown the ball, he wouldn't have broken the window. ...If he had caught the ball, he would not have broken the window.

Follow up: Have students write a story about the picture. Ask them to write as many sentences with 'if clauses' as possible.

Lesson — Reading and Vocabulary Development
Intermediate Level

Objective: To improve reading and vocabulary skills via visual reinforcement of the comic strip.

Materials: Xeroxed copies of Cathy comic strip.

Dictionary

List of words in reading on the blackboard

self-confident		sleek	muscular
build	steady	gaze	blur(red)
dissolve(d)		struggle	
urge	whisper	darling	

Activity: Whole class

Procedure:

1. Distribute the comic strip and have students briefly look at the frames and discuss what the characters are doing.

2. Review the list of words on the board to insure the students know the meanings.

3. Have students look up the definitions in the dictionary

4. Have them write words and definitions in their notebooks.

5. Have students read the dialogue in the strip.

6. Ask the following comprehension questions relating to the dialogue.

7. Review vocabulary exercise on handout

Follow up: Assign students to write one original sentence with each new word learned in the story.

Comprehension Questions

1. What kind of story is Cathy reading?
2. Who has just entered the room?
3. What does the man in the story look like?
4. How does the character in the story feel about the man who entered the room?
5. What does he say to his lover?
6. At that point, what does Irving do?
7. How does Cathy react?
8. What is the humor behind this comic strip?

Vocabulary Study

Write the corresponding form of the noun, adjective or verb of the words that follow.

	Noun	Adjective	Verb
1. confident	_____	_____	_____
2. presence	_____	_____	_____
3. defense	_____	_____	_____
4. logic	_____	_____	_____
5. muscular	_____	_____	_____
6. beautiful	_____	_____	_____
7. struggling	_____	_____	_____
8. whisper	_____	_____	_____

Lesson — Reading/ Cultural for an Intermediate Class

Objective: To improve reading and vocabulary skills.

To discuss male/female roles in American culture.

Materials: Cathy comic strip xeroxed

Doonesbury comic strip xeroxed

Handout with comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises.

Activity: Whole class/ group/ role playing

Procedure:

1. Class will organize itself into groups of four or five.

2. Each group will receive a different strip.

3. Students will practice role playing at their seats.

4. Students will then discuss the dialogues in the strip.

5. Students will reassemble into a whole class unit again.

6. Whole class will receive copies of each strip.

7. One member of the group will report about what he has read in the strip.

8. New vocabulary items will be discussed and clarified.

9. The class will hold a discussion on the issue of male/female relationships.

Follow up: Students will answer the comprehension questions about each strip.

Students will complete the vocabulary exercise for homework.

Comprehension Questions

Cathy No. 1

1. In the first Cathy comic strip, what have Cathy and Ernie just finished doing?

2. What have they just received from the waiter?

3. Who is going to pay the bill?

4. Why does Ernie think Cathy should pay the bill?

5. Why does Cathy want Ernie to pay?

6.What is their solution to the problem?

7. How would you resolve the situation?

8. What is the humor behind the situation?

Cathy No. 2

1. What does Cathy want to do in the first frame?

2. How does Philip react? Does he want to leave?

3. What does Philip really want to do?

4. When Philip doesn't leave, what is Cathy's reaction?

5. Does Philip go home? Why not?

6. Why would this comic strip make an American laugh?

Cathy No. 3

1. What is the conflict of ideas and emotions presented in this strip?

2.Can you explain the humor in this strip?

Doonesbury No. 1

1. What is the Chinese student doing in Frames 1, 2, and 3.?

2. When the American student approaches her, what is her questions to the Chinese student?

3. How does the Chinese student react to this question?

4.What does the American coed want to know about her boyfriend?

5. Is the Chinese student interested in how handsome or caring her boyfriend is? Why not?

6. How do you think American girls react when they first meet a man?

7. How do women in your country treat a man they have just met?

8. What are the qualities you consider important in a person?

Synonym Exercise

Substitute one of the following words for the words underlined in the sentences.

financially	dominant	compromise
gratification	self-sufficient	berserk
slight(est)	offended	thoughtful
sentiment		

1. Peter is really a very <u>considerate</u> person.

2. What are your <u>feelings</u> on that issue?

3. The difference between the two is very <u>little</u>.

4. I consider my sister to be a very <u>independent</u> person.

5. The dog went <u>mad</u> and bit several persons.

Synonym Exercise continued.

6. Teaching is a profession which gives me a lot of satisfaction

7. Do you feel this business is economically sound?

8. The controlling factor was their strong family tradition.

9. In order to solve the milk strike, everyone had to agree to concede something.

10. I'm very insulted by that remark.

Lesson ___ Listening Comprehension Skills/ Intermediate

Objective: To improve listening and speaking skills

Materials: Wordless Workshop comic strip cut in two parts as indicated

List of vocabulary needed to describe the picture.

cake	ingredient	top shelf
mix	stool	mirror
peel	stick	cabinet
top	sticky	paper

Activity: Paired Practice

Procedure: 1. Arrange the class in pairs and have each student back to back.

2. Distribute the strips. The first half to one student and the second half to the other student.

3. Have the first student explain the problem to his partner using the picture as his guide. He must not show his partner the strip.

4. Have the other student give the solution to his partner.

5. The first student should write down the solution that his partner offers. The second students does the same.

6. Then have students switch their pictures to see if it verifies what each has explained.

Follow up: Students will collaborate and write a short paragraph stating the problem and solution.

Lesson — Listening Comprehension

Objective: To teach listening comprehension skills

Materials: Xeroxed copies of Wordless Workshop strip.

Activity: Whole Class

Procedure:

1. Distribute first half of the comic strip and discuss what the problem is with the students.

2. Then describe the solution to the students.

3. Have them draw a picture of the object you describe in order to solve the problem presented in the first half of the comic strip.

4. Have five students come to the board and draw what they think they heard.

Follow up: Distribute the second half of the cartoon and discuss what was done to solve the problem.

Homework: Have students write a story about the picture.

Lesson — Communication Skills - Beginning Level

Objective: To practice the structures There is/ It is

To write your own dialogue in the balloons of the strip.

To improve speaking skills through characterization of the strip.

Materials: Hagar the Horrible comic strip with original dialogue whited out.

Some Vocabulary items

Hagar	Helga	There is	It is
soup	oatmeal	fly	insect

Activity: Paired Practice

Procedure: Students will create a dialogue filling in each balloon in the strip.

2. They will practice it at their seats.

3. Teacher will check for accuracy

4. They will dramatize the skit

5. Original strip with original dialogue will be distributed and compared with students dialogues.

Follow up: Have students write 5 sentences about the classroom using There is/ There are for homework.

Have students right 5 sentences about the classroom using It is/ They are for homework.

Lesson Conversation/ Communication Skills - Beginning

Objective: Students will describe what they see in the strip in an unstructured conversational setting.

Materials: Xeroxed copies of Ferdnand with the last frame covered.

Activity: Whole class

Procedure: 1. Distribute comic strip

2. Have class discuss what is happening in the picture.

3. Ask them to guess Ferdnand's reaction to the policy he has just bought.

4. Uncover last frame and ask students to tell how Ferdnand really reacted.

Follow up: Write a story in the past tense describing the comic strip.

Lesson — Communication Skills/ Observation - Beginning

Objective: To find the differences between the top and bottom panels.

To discuss what the characters in the cartoon might be saying to each other.

Materials: Hocus Focus cartoon xeroxed for the class.

Procedure:

1. Distribute cartoon and tell students that frame no. 1 is different from frame no. 2.

2. Have students tell you what differences they can find.

3. Have students tell you what remains the same

4. Ask students to imagine what the characters are saying to each other.

Follow up: Write a short story in the present continuous tense describing what the characters are doing or saying.

Lesson — Communication Skills - Beginning Level

Objective: To provide unstructured conversational practice using comic strips.

Materials: Xeroxed copies of Henry cartoon

List of vocabulary possibly needed to describe the strip.

donut	bowl	window	sill
fishing rod		hook	hairbrush

Activity: Whole class/ group activity

Procedure:

1. Review the vocabulary items on the blackboard.
2. Distribute pictures
3. Have students discuss what they see in each frame.
4. Taperecord comments.
5. Replay for error correction.

Follow up: Ask students to cover the strip and then ask questions regarding the strip to test for comprehension.

Assign: Students will right 8 wh questions using the present continuous tense about the picture.

Lesson Reading/ Culture - Intermediate

Objective: To practice reading in a role playing situation.

To discuss employer-employee relationships.

To discuss meaning of April Fool's Day and similar holidays in the students' culture.

Materials: Blondie comic strip xeroxed for the class.

Handout of comprehension questions.

Activity: Paired practice or Whole Class.

Procedure: 1. Distribute strip and have students role play in pairs first.

2. Have them practice dialogue until two students are ready to play act in front of the class.

3. Have two volunteers role play the scene

4. Discuss what is happening in the strip with the class.

5. Discuss some of the conversation features. For example, Lemme - Oh,boy! Gee! Wow! etc.

6. Hand out comprehension questions and go over in class.

7. Discuss worker/boss relationship.

8. Why is this comic strip funny to an American?

9. What is April Fool's Day?

10. Discuss some of the holidays in students' countries

Follow up: Have students write answers to comprehension questions for homework.

Comprehension Questions on Blondie comic strip.

1. How does Mr. Dithers greet Dagwood on this day?

2. What does he decide to do for Dagwood?

3. What has Dagwood been doing so well lately?

4. What is he going to give Dagwood to help him with his work?

5. What plans does Mr. Dithers have for Dagwood's office?

6. What does Mr. Dithers bring Dagwood? Is Mr. Dithers serious? Why not?

7. In reality what kind of relationship do Dagwood and Mr. Dithers have?

8. Why do you think the strip is funny to an American?

9. What is April Fool's Day? Do you have a similar holiday in your country?

Lesson — Cultural- Advanced Level

Objective: To discuss the position of women in American society.

To discuss women's rights

To analyze the underlying social criticism in the strip.

Materials: Xeroxed copy of the Doonesbury comic strip.

Activity: Whole class/group activity

Procedure: 1. Distribute strip to class and have them briefly look at the pictures.

2. Discuss what they see in each picture - who are the characters, when does this story take place? etc.

3. Assign two students to play the parts of Amy and Nate. Students will read the parts aloud in class.

4.What are the two characters talking about?

5. What is the humor behind the strip?

6. What is the cartoonist criticizing?

7. What are the equal rights women are looking for?

8. Discuss women's position in other countries.

Follow up: Write a short composition on the topic Are men and women really equal? for homework

Lesson — Culture - Advanced Level

Objective: To discuss certain aspects of American family life

To discuss the behavior of children in American family life

Materials: Attached one framed cartoons xeroxed for the class.

Activity: Whole class

Procedure:

1. Distribute the attached cartoons
2. Have class discuss what is happening in each cartoon.
3. Ask class why an American would find the cartoon to be funny.
4. Discuss the various aspects of children's behavior in American society.
5. Discuss the various attitudes and reactions parents have to children's behavior.
6. Discuss the underlying tension that each cartoon is trying to relieve.
7. Discuss the mother/child relationship in the countries of your students.

Follow up: Have students write a short composition on how they expect children to behave. The composition should be about 100 words.

Lesson — Communication Skills/ Writing Skills
Beginning/ Low Intermediate

Objective: To develop communications skills via the creation of imaginary dialogues and role playing.

Materials: HOCUS FOCUS cartoon

Vocabulary items listed on the blackboard

cap	rug	lamp	mover
t.v.	sleeve	box	light switch
bored	complain		

Activity: Group activity of 4 or 5 people

Procedure:

1. Distribute the Hocus Focus cartoon.

2. Review vocabulary items that might be used in their dialogues.

3. Have students write a 10 line dialogue Each character in the cartoon should say at least 2 lines.

4. Circle room to correct any grammatical errors while students are writing dialogues.

5. Have the students practice their dialogues among themselves for a few minutes until they know their lines.

6. Have the students present their dialogues in front of the class.

7. Tape record and replay dialogues for possible error correction.

Follow up: Assign a short paragraph to be written about the cartoon for homework.

Lesson Writing - Beginning Level

Objective: To improve writing in a cohesive manner.
To write sentences in sequential order.
To practice past tense forms and descriptive writing

Materials: Copies of Ferdnand and Henry comic strips.

Activity: Paired Practice

Procedure: 1. Distribute strips and briefly discuss vocabulary needed to describe each picture.

2. Review past tense forms in each frame.

3. Have students work in twos.

4. Have students write one sentence for each frame describing what they see.

Follow up: Students will write some of their sentences on the board for possible error correction.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages I have attempted to document how cartoons and comic strips can be used as an instructional tool in the teaching of English as a Second Language. I feel the professional literature available on the subject adequately supports my feelings that these 'vehicles of American culture' are also very educationally sound tools.

My lessons have attempted to illustrate what language skills can be taught using the cartoons and comic strips. I feel as an agent of American culture, they are superb material in a nutshell. Specific cartoons and comic strips such as Doonesbury, Blondie or Cathy (and some of the others which I did not use such as L'il Orphan Annie, Winnie Winkle or L'il Abner) are very appropriate for culture or reading lessons because they deal with aspects of human life. I found I preferred the self-contained comic strips rather than the serial comic strips for teaching reading or culture because the students did not have to follow the strip to understand what is happening. Also, they capsulized one idea very nicely within just a few frames.

The one framed cartoons are very apropos for cultural lessons and dialogue writing. They allow the students to

really use their creativity in trying to imagine what the characters are saying if the cartoon happens to be uncaptioned.

My experience showed that the wordless comic strips were best for structure, listening comprehension and writing lessons. In this case, the students only have to concentrate their efforts on understanding the factual aspects of the comic strip or cartoon. There is usually no hidden meaning behind the strip for the students to delve into. Some of the samples of the students' writing in the appendix, I feel show very effectively how students incorporated the new structures into their writing and also showed accurate sequencing of events. Even though there were grammatical errors in their writing. The main focus of the lesson (such as the past tense endings and irregular past forms) was clearly learned by the students. I must mention that I only concentrated on having the students master the past tenses. That may account for spelling and other syntactical errors in their writing.

I found a very positive point in using the cartoons and comic strips to be the humorous aspect they present. Students especially enjoy the wordless strips where the

the last frame was a complete turnabout to what they expected to see. It is highly effective to use the comic cut up into strips. The last frame which containes the element of surprise is always the one which 'gets a laugh' from the class.

The cartoons and comic strips used in the essay were found in the daily newspapers such as the Daily News, the New York Post and suburban newspapers in the New York area. Also, if you have a subscription to one of the women's magazines such as Family Circle or Better Homes and Gardens, you can find several good one frame cartoons. The New Yorker is also an excellent source for some contemporary cartoons.

In conclusion, I found the strips and cartoons offered me an inexpensive and highly flexible teaching aid and I feel it definitely added a plus to my teaching English as a second language.

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APPENDIX

Samples of Students' Writing

One Day with Louie and his dog.

Yesterday Louie deicided to train his dog. He threw the ball and asked its come back the ball before him. He threw the ball, but his dog didn't do. He had to go and picked up the ball. He threw the ball again, but the ball collided with a man and hit his head. The man was angrey and ran toward to Louie and punched on the Louie's face. The dog ran to the ball, but the man thought the dog chased him. The man escaped. The dog took the ball on its mouth and came back toward to Louie.

Louie threw the ball because he wanted his dog came back the ball for him. He told his dog to do that. Louie picked up the ball. He threw the ball again. The ball hit the person's head. He got very angry. He punched the Louie. Louie fell down on the ground. The Louie's dog chased the man. The man thought that the dog was chasing him to hurt him but the Louie's dog ran over the ball to come back it for Louie. The Louie's dog caught the ball and came back if to Louie.

This story is about Louie and his dog. Louie wanted his dog chased the ball and pick it up his mouth. Therefore he threw the ball but his dog didn't chase the ball. The second time he stood near the ball and threw the ball and he wanted his dog chased the ball. The ball hit to head a man. The man got anger and turned towards him. The man punched him with his fist. For the third time his dog chased him and ran after him. The dog caught the ball.

Louie and his dog were playing. Louie was teaching a trick to his dog. he threw the ball and told the dog to catch the ball but the dog didn't do it; (he had to catch it.) He picked the ball up and threw it again but the ball hit on the man's head, the angry man went to Louie and punched him on her face. Then the dog began to run after the other man, but the dog passed him and brought home the ball.

Sample of Students' Writing - Use of Future with 'be going to'

Louie is thinking in what he is going to do.
He take his brush, a can of paint and he is going to paint the fence. He almost finish, but when he turns his head, he is going to see a drawing of a smile face. Then Louie is angry, but he is going to eraise the drawing. Louie is going to finish painting the fence. He's going to his house with his briefcase. He looks like a executive but he is only a regular worker. Louie is going to see the painting that somebody draw in his fence. Oh! Louie is angry he's going to eraise the fence. Louie is in fron of the fence and he is going to see that the piece of fence with the drawing is in a gallery of art. Louie looks surprise he is going to think that don't believe what he's looking.

Louie is going to paint the fence because somebody wrote on it. He is going to see back to him if the fence is nice but he sees the face has a a happy face. He is going to paint fast because he has to go to work, after he finish he is going to pass your home. When he is passing by his fence he sees somebody wrote the fence again. He has to paint again. When he is come back, he see some piece of fence is missing. But he has to leave because is late to work. When he is going to pass front at art gallery he see the piece of fence.

Louie's going to paint the fence. He's going to paint the face which he islooking. He's going to finish painting. He's going to go to work. He's going to pass the fence. He's going to see another drawing. He's going to go to paint the fence again. He's going to be surprised the fence is missing. He's going to see the fence in the store.

I'm going to write for you an adventure about Louie, who is middle-aged. He is going to paint his fense. He is going to see that somebody draw something funny in the painted fense. To he is going to paint it again. Then he is going to continue his painting. He is going to go to the fense after he came from his job. But he is going to see agin that someone is draw something. He is going to bring the paint and the brush again. He is going to see that a piece of the fense is missing. At last, he is going to see his missing part of the fense in the art gallery.

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